

SECRET*Briefing*

8 March 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: ARGO Symposium

The ARGO Symposium held at the NPIC auditorium on 8 March drew a full house.

Dr. Hornig opened the meeting. He noted that the purpose of ARGO was to assess the value of existing satellite photography for civilian uses,* and that this had been accomplished. He also alluded to the assistance that this examination would provide in planning for a civilian system if that should become necessary.

He then went on to emphasize that the question of costs would become an important factor in future use of satellite photography from intelligence missions; any modifications or increments to missions planned for the basic objective would involve costs that would have to be shared by the civilian agencies, in addition to the exploitation costs which the civilian agencies had already recognized would have to be assumed by them. During the course of the morning Don Steinainger interjected the same thought several times.

The rest of the morning was taken up with summary reports on possible uses of the photography, given by some 11 or 12 experts in various disciplines (hydrometeorology, land use, etc.). These presentations were followed in the afternoon by a general discussion and question period, which was particularly enlightening.

Three aspects of the meeting are worth particular comment:

1. The considerable amount of enthusiasm which had been developed for this photography by almost all of the

Declassified for NASA equities per NASA letter

*Detailed ARGO objectives are listed on attached sheet.

NRO review(s) completed.

participants, particularly for applications involving the planning phases of large projects and the acquisition of information on less developed countries. Steininger had told us this might be so, although certainly none of the participants felt that satellite photography would answer all their problems. The enthusiasm was revealed more strongly in the discussion and question period than in the formal talks. It seems clear that pressures from these agencies are going to mount as the ARGO steering committee refines its data in its next phase.

2. Despite Hornig and Steininger's cautions on costs, there was a good deal of comment about how the hardware and planning of particular missions might be adapted to civilian objectives, "without interfering with the primary military intelligence mission." For example, the team leader said that although he knew photo interpreters felt that the use of color would degrade resolution, he and some of his knowledgeable colleagues did not necessarily agree with this since they thought the problem could be overcome technically. Also some of the participants appeared to think that there might be enough of their requirements to justify an entire mission from time to time.

3. A representative of NASA (I gather an alumnus of CIA) twice made extensive comments to the effect that no matter what the civilian participants and the operators of the present systems worked out together, NASA is going ahead with plans for an earth resources satellite. In case anyone missed this message, he gave it again later in the session, slightly, but only slightly, paraphrased.

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(Signed) Thomas A. Parrott

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AD/DCI/NIPE

N. B. In discussing Hornig's letter to the DCI and Deputy SecDef, with Steininger, I emphasized again why we did not want to

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tie this program into USIB. He accepted this but reiterated that he hoped he could continue his liaison with [redacted] in a DCI liaison role. I said I personally saw no reason to disrupt such a relationship, but that in the long run perhaps other arrangements might be required.

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Distribution:

- #1 - DCI
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Objectives of ARGO Study

1. To evaluate the information content of the existing photography as it would apply to various physical resource surveys and to determine whether it could be used to meet some current needs of the civilian agencies.
2. To develop within the civilian agencies a cadre of people who would understand the photography and the techniques of exploitation, and who could then assist their agency in making use of the photography and in planning for future systems and applications.
3. To determine whether the existing systems could yield information of operational value to AID about the less developed countries.

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